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LAVENDER Volume 20, Issue 518

From Minnesota, With Love: The Spring 2015 Wedding Issue

April 2-15, 2015

LAVENDER



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The Spring 2015 Wedding Issue

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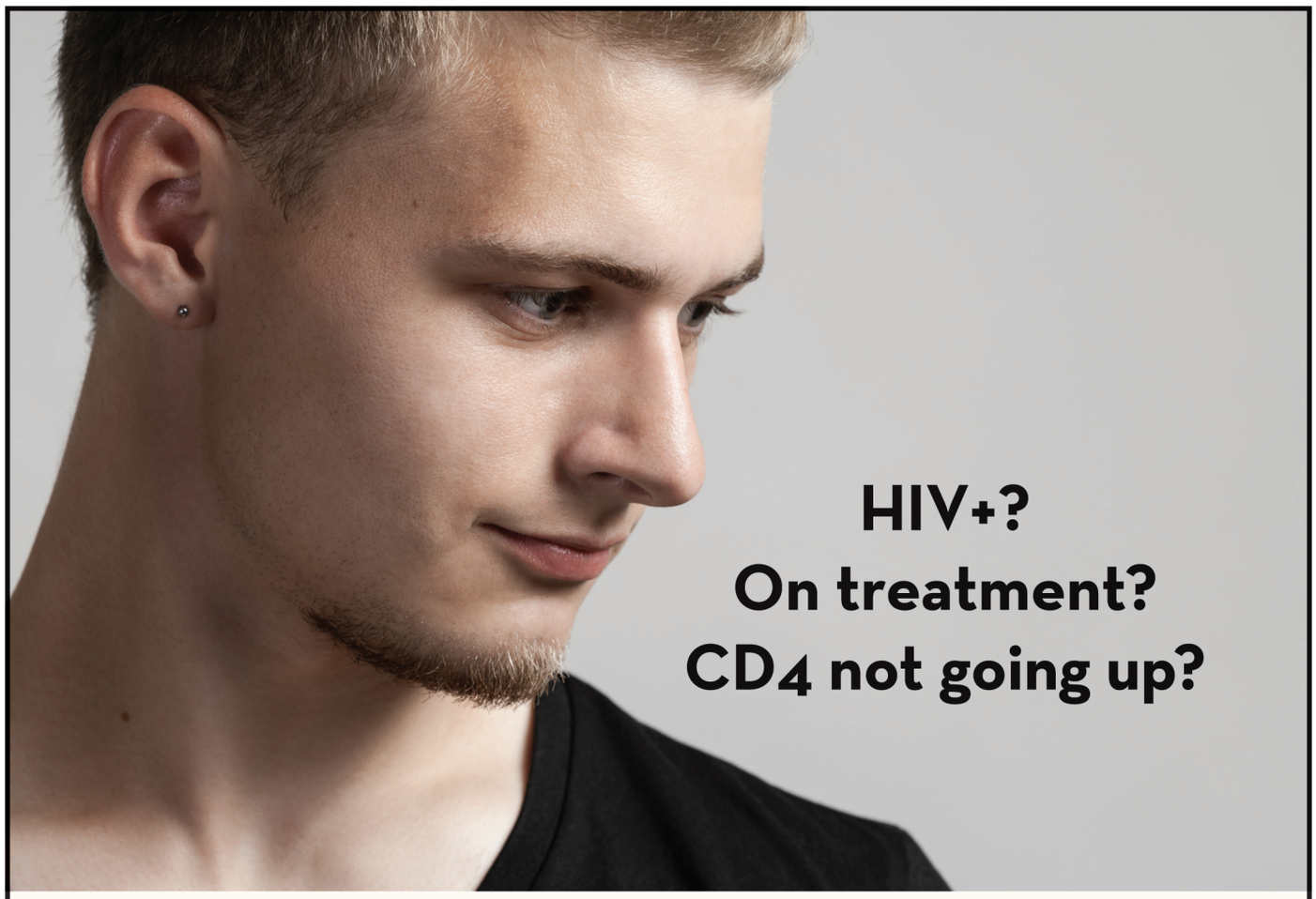
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FROM THE EDITOR

WHAT'S NEXT?

BY ANDY LIEN

I recently attended a weekend-long conference in Philadelphia for journalists from regional publications and blogs that cover the rainbow community, organized by the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. This convening had as its theme "What Next?" as the prospect of nationwide marriage equality looms with the Supreme Court of the United States addressing it in late April. We listened a lot, discussed much, disagreed some, and left as better professionals who work for and with this community. While there wasn't a formal vote at the end of it, I'm pretty sure the assembled journalists agreed that we're not at "What's Next?" yet.

Can there be a post-marriage-equality culture for the rainbow community when Indiana signs a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) into law? Such "religious freedom" legislation looks to allow discrimination against same-sex couples seeking marriage services as well as block transgender people from using restrooms that match their gender identity, among many other things (the slope is slippery and is much farther-reaching than this community). Clearly, in the quest for civil rights for this community, marriage is part, marriage is not all, and it's certainly not over. In fact, it may never be over. Ask the women about whether or not this is a post-women's-liberation society. Ask the people of color if this is a post-racial society. Ask this community if being post-marriage-equality in Minnesota leaves us feeling comfortable...or targeted.

I'm currently reading the latest historical fiction book by Erik Larson called *Dead Wake* about the last Atlantic crossing of the British ocean liner RMS *Lusitania*, which was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat in 1915. (Think of the RMS *Titanic* being taken down by an act of war, rather than from damage after hitting an iceberg.) In the book and in his fine-tooth-comb style, Larson details the many factors that led to this tremendous loss of civilian lives. What's slapping me in the face right now is how, before America got involved in WWI, Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm gave the order that any submarine commander in any situation could singularly muddle through any ambiguity and attack any vessel that was deemed a threat or out of line, in that commander's opinion.

Kaiser Wilhelm privatized acts of war. A single commander could determine, based on whatever was affecting his judgment, to obliterate whatever and whomever he saw fit.

So it is with these RFRAs. We live in a country of states. These states have people. A state which signs such a "religious freedom" bill into law is giving each private business owner the right to determine, based on whatever is affecting his or her judgment, what they will and will not do for others, according to their religious opinions and convictions. These localized, religion-based opinions get to trump our separation of Church and State, thereby allowing discrimination to be legal and acted upon by people who can consider themselves surrogates of the State. They have been empowered to fire upon ocean liners of civilians, however and whenever they see fit, in the name of religion.

For someone who majored in women's, gender, and sexuality studies and communications studies as well as left her first day of seminary for Lutheran ministry to take this job as managing editor of this magazine, this topic sits squarely in my wheelhouse. What's more, I've been studying dialectical thinking, which is the ability to view issues from multiple perspectives and come to agreeable and reconciling conclusions from seemingly contradictory points. Dialectical thinking means taking out "but" and using "and" between two things that may not be in agreement. Examples of dialectical thinking in my life include statements like I can be a person of faith and not take the Bible as the inerrant word of God; I can be a person who loves babies and believe in reproductive freedom; I can believe in the Freedom of Speech and hate every word that is spewing from hate-filled mouths; I can believe we're working toward the same goal and I can disagree with what you say. Along these lines, Thomas Ehnert's piece about faith and marriage in this issue (p. 16) is full of dialectical thinking that is easy for us to relate to, and is a great example of how we're all still developing ourselves as we go. We all need encouragement.

Encouraging that "and" thinking that ties together two contradictory thoughts with acceptance doesn't mean I have to accept what I don't like, it just means I have to live with the fact that such a thing exists. Because that's life. Life is dialectical. Contradictions abound. And, with greater understanding of each other and the empathy that usually follows, we can find that there are fewer actual contradictions but more nuances. And that's what the people who are legalizing discrimination don't get: we have to live with what we don't like because we live in America. We live with people. This is life and it is full of things to disagree with, ~~but~~ and that's how it goes. And we'd be best served as a society by trying to understand each other, rather than thinking we're on opposing sides of a war.

What can be done?

As I write, legislators in Georgia are trying to halt their own version of a RFRA by introducing an amendment that would not allow people to use religion to get around state and local nondiscrimination protections. I'm guessing more progress will be made against these terrible things as well, but that's a hopeful start on a legislative level. For us as citizens, it won't be as easy as a bumper sticker or a Facebook post. We might choose to boycott Indiana, but it might not matter from here in Minnesota. But, we can make strides where we can and make numbers really count where they're needed to backfill some empty spaces, here in our own state.

Religion will be pivotal. Religion must be kept out of government AND religion must be reclaimed by those who would still find it palatable and agreeable. The person who presented the topic of RFRAs at our journalists conference, Katherine Grainger, made a compelling case for getting involved in religion again. I'm paraphrasing from my notes, but she said: When religion rejects us, we reject religion. We give up that religious voice. In the United States, religion trumps, so when we give it up, we lose that ground. If we were to embrace a more religious narrative, we can reestablish the balance that exists in this country. By conceding the religious voice, we've given up who the moral vanguards are. The Religious Right claims the moral space and then excludes. By reclaiming it, we can shift it... so it's not religious rights versus civil rights, but incorporating the two.

See? It's dialectical. It's religious rights and civil rights (for those of us who can expand our thinking to include the two, at any rate).

And, about those civil rights, marriage isn't the only topic that still requires state-by-state (and hopefully national) extension of rights. In these states that might end up with RFRAs, they likely don't have nondiscrimination laws on the books like we do in Minnesota. We need to encourage more national movement for civil rights before what's been done is undone, state by state. As Grainger said at the conference, when we rest on our laurels, we are opening the door to undo. And we can't have that.

So, what's next?

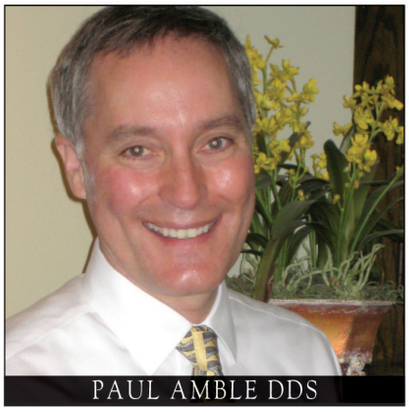
Here at Lavender Media, we're going to continue doing what we've been doing for the past 20 years. We're going to continue to work for the community while we work against the people who have sought to invalidate and illegitimize this community. We will continue to do this by presenting story after story as proof of life. From our "From Minnesota, With Love" feature to our "Wedding Story" couples to our "Real Weddings" photography, this issue offers proof of real lives that validate this community and its diversity of people and choices. Proof of life is an odd analogy in that "proof of life" is what's required in kidnaping cases, but it's a valid one. It's saying to the larger society around us to not give up on us. Our hearts are beating, our blood is pumping, and a skewed sense of liberty will not hold us captive.

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THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING: LIVING AND LOVING TOGETHER

BY E.B. BOATNER

This proverb, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," traces back to the 14th century, appearing in other ages and forms, including Miguel de Cervantes's: "Al freír de los huevos, lo verá" ("You will see it as you fry the eggs").

The adage, incorporating nourishing food analogies, works equally for puddings, eggs, and relationships. Author Tim Clausen mines the theme of nourishment in *Love Together: Longtime Male Couples on Healthy Intimacy and Communication* ("Books" 517). While focusing on male couples, the respondents offer insights for any two individuals contemplating spending the rest of their lives together.

Defining long-term, Clausen started his twenty-three interviews with couples together for ten years, then, in incremental decades, chapters including sixty and seventy years. And yes, even unto death: Eric and Eugene. Together sixty years, they were able to marry in December 2013, scant days before Eugene died in Eric's arms. In interview, Eric had said, "We're quite different, and he really does irritate me a lot, but I've never loved anyone the way I've loved him."

Together ten years, Ryan said he and Ian broke up twice in their first year, which allowed them to explore, but that after three months, "we both came to the conclusion that there was nothing better out there than what we already had. So that pulled us together and we've been exclusive and monogamous ever since."

Not every couple is monogamous or religious, but most relationships have some spiritual component, and all stress mutual consent and courtesy when dealing with a partner's feelings.

Many seeking religion were rebuffed. "We feel like exiles from the Roman Catholic Church because of its homophobia," says John (with Charlie 48 years), "and we can't go to a Catholic service and hear our love denounced as evil. So we go to Metropolitan Community Church here in Fort Lauderdale that is Sunshine Cathedral, which has over one thousand people every Sunday, and a large number of them — maybe over half — are exiled Roman Catholics."

Use the best ingredients, measure accurately, keep cool, add taste-tingling spices, and cook at a good heat without burning. Everyone uses the same ingredients but, as for BBQ ribs and wedding cake, your formula for love need only please two. Bon appétit! ■



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EVERY MARRIAGE IS PROFOUND MYSTERY

BY THOMAS EHNERT

Some of us, myself included, actually tried being compatible with a spouse of the opposite gender. It didn't work. That's just not how God, fate, the universe, biology, or life made us. State laws are finally recognizing this aspect of natural law.

Ten years ago, I was a closeted minister in an ultra-conservative church. I remember what it felt like to officiate at weddings. I saw the beaming faces of the bride and groom at the altar. We'd always hear Paul's words in the New Testament describing marriage as a "profound mystery." Officiating at weddings, I could just sense that I was participating in a profound mystery.

It was also, however, profoundly sad. I never thought it would be possible for me as a closeted gay man to know that happiness. I never thought we as GLBT people would experience that joy either, at least not in a legally recognized way.

Ten years later, I'm not only out of the closet (and ministry), but I'm writing an article for the marriage edition of *Lavender*! When I think about marriage, I immediately think back on my experience marrying people. In the denomination I had been attached to, it was common to read about Adam and Eve at weddings. The story goes that, after God formed Adam from the ground, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." So God took a rib out of Adam, and from this rib God formed Eve. The story concludes, "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, and be united to his wife, and the two will

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



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	7:30 pm	Music for Good Friday: ***St. Mark's Passion***
Holy Saturday	7:30 pm	Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday	8 am	Choral Eucharist
	9:45 am	Easter Egg Hunt
	10:30 am	Choral Eucharist w/Brass
	5 pm	Evensong

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Good Friday—April 3, noon
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Churches interfaith service

Easter Sunday—April 5
6:30 a.m., Chapel;
9 & 11 a.m., Sanctuary

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become one flesh." (This is the source of that snide fundamentalist saying, "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.")

When I preached about this story ten years ago, I remember honing in on the phrase, a "helper suitable."

Adam and Eve would be suitable helpers for one another emotionally. When one sorrowed, the other would be sad. When one rejoiced, the other would be happy. When one was struggling, the other could uplift. When one needed to talk, the other could listen.

What part of that would not be true for "Adam and Steve?" Or "Eva and Eve?"

Adam and Eve would also be helpers suitable for each other spiritually. They both had a side of them that transcended the physical. In one another, they found love, joy, peace, goodness, and companionship.

What part of that would not be true for "Eva and Eve" or "Adam and Steve?"

Thirdly, they would be helpers suitable for one another physically. They could express their spiritual and emotional bond in a physical way, becoming one flesh.

What part of that would not be true for "Adam and Steve" or "Eva and Eve?"

Some say that on the basis of this passage from Genesis, a *man* must be married to his *wife*. A male and a female. An Adam and an Eve. But in seminary, we distinguished between passages that command something and passages that describe an event. If this passage were one that commands something, it would be wrong for any single person to remain unmarried. So this passage merely describes marriage, as it existed in ancient Israel.

Remove the heteronormative assumption about the Adam and Eve legend, and you have a story that could be lovely to read at any wedding. People of whatever gender identification find someone with whom they are compatible emotionally, spiritually, and physically. They become one in a relationship. There certainly was neither religious institution to bless nor government entity to recognize the joining of Adam and Eve together in the legends of Genesis. God, fate, the universe, or life simply joined them together.

The person with whom we GLBT people would be emotionally, spiritually, and physically compatible are people of our own gender. Some of us, myself included, actually tried being compatible with a spouse of the opposite gender. It didn't work. That's just not how God, fate, the universe, biology, or life made us. State laws are finally recognizing this aspect of natural law.

To illustrate, a gay friend of mine is mourning the recent passing of his spouse. There was no difference between how my mom retired to care for my dad, and how my friend was going to retire to care for his spouse. There is no difference between my mom's grief when my dad died and my friend's grief when his husband died. Both couples were "helpers suitable" to one another, to use the language of the Genesis legend again. When the two become one, it is the same sense of loss when the one becomes two again. It is the same love.

This is indeed a profound mystery – the mystery of union between humans and humans.

I'll be honest. Ten years ago it wasn't so beautiful. It was lovely to preach about, looking at all those straight couples coming to get married. I envied them. I thought that kind of union was for straight people only, not for an Adam like me who needed a Steve. If it wasn't good for Adam to be alone, why would it be good for us GLBT people to be alone? I am free, we GLBT people are free, to experience for ourselves that profound mystery of union – union with a person who truly is our emotional, spiritual, and physical companion. That I have come so far personally in my self-understanding, that we as a society have come so far in our collective understanding, is itself a profound mystery. ■





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Good Friday Service: April 3, 7:00 pm - with guest artist Ta-Coumba Aiken.
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7pm - Prayer Around the Cross

The Great Vigil of Easter, April 4
5:30pm - New fire, and the story of salvation

Easter Sunday, April 5
7:00am - Sunrise Holy Communion
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT LIEN PHOTOGRAPHY



(left to right) Custom-tailored linen blazer, **Liberty by Target** tie, and custom-made slacks by **Astor & Black** (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael.** Vintage vest, shirt, vintage pocket watch and fob, and vintage silver flower brooch (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael.** "The Gershwin" dress ($6985) by **Johanna Johnson,** Harlow Belt ($650) by **Johanna Johnson,** "The Violet Comb" ($225) by **Jennifer Behr,** and vintage accessories from **The White Room**; Bouquet ($300) with tillandsia, daffodils, ranunculus, trailing jasmine, silver brunia, fern shoots and feathers from **Flora Bella.**

THE DRESS

BY SHANE LUECK

The dress. A nondescript noun has come to stand for so much. "Have you found *the dress*? Let me see *the dress*!"

They even made it into a television show with multiple spin-offs: *Say Yes to the Dress*. And I'm sure you know exactly what I'm talking about; *the dress* undoubtedly refers to a (generally) white gown worn for an event that is also made up of nondescript words: *the big day*.

Wedding dresses are Anne McNulty and Carmen Duerr's passion and they've turned them into their business, aptly named The White Room. Duerr has been a seamstress and dressmaker for over 20 years with a long history in the service industry. McNulty has been involved in the service industry for over 10 years as well, with dreams of starting a fashion-forward retail business in the Twin Cities. As the owners discussed ideas of collaborating, The White Room was born.

The White Room carries up-and-coming designers that focus on hand-tailored, unique designs. Each bride is measured, and her perfect dress is made to order through the designers. Designers currently featured in the studio include Johanna Johnson, Houghton NYC, YolanCris, and Rosa Clara with accessories by Jennifer Behr and vintage collections curated by the owners. But keep an eye on the website, as they plan to expand and include a couple more designers by the end of 2015, with hopes of including more in the future.

"The dresses that we feature include everything from ethereal silks and tulle with intricate lace patterns to bold fabrics and designs not traditionally found in bridal gowns," McNulty says.

And with the intricacy that is often associated with *the dress*, it is recommended that dress orders are done a minimum of 6 months prior to the wedding date. Then, the owners anticipate and plan for 4 weeks to perfect and complete any final details of the dress. Of course, finding the perfect dress is half the battle.

McNulty recommends scouring Pinterest, wedding blogs, and fashion or bridal magazines in order to get an idea of what you are looking for in a gown. "Typically, we will tell brides to find something that they will feel comfortable in and that fits in with their style," Duerr says. "However, sometimes you can find a gown that surprises you and you didn't expect, stylistically."

Each bridal appointment is made individually, ensuring that the bride gets undivided attention. "We strive to make sure every bride that comes through our door feels comfortable and welcome," Duerr says.

Brides are then asked to look over the gowns and pick any that stand out to them, after which Duerr and McNulty then choose a few they feel the bride would like based on that selection. Duerr also makes sure the bride gets all of the details from the day: "At the end of the appointment, we take notes on what gowns they liked best and send a follow-up email with the details of the appointment." With so much depending on one garment, you want this kind of attention to detail.

To set up an appointment, contact The White Room at 612-361-7175.
2406 Fremont Ave. S., Minneapolis
www.thewhiteroommpls.com



(left to right) "Sensual" dress ($3150) by **Rosa Clara** and vintage accessories from **The White Room.** Custom-made black tuxedo, upcycled white tuxedo shirt with silver Aztec buttons (pricing available upon request) **from Dapper Dan Michael** and **Ferragamo** tuxedo shoes; Boutonniere by **Flora Bella.** "The Lucille" dress ($5640) by **Johanna Johnson** and vintage accessories from **The White Room.**



(left to right) Custom upcycled **NeverDown** three-piece navy blue suit with irridescent under-collar, with matching custom-made leather and irridescent bowtie (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael.** "Lavagna" dress ($3285) by **YolanCris** and "The Rosita" headband ($195) by **Jennifer Behr** from **The White Room.**

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Custom upcycled **NeverDown** blazer with green leather accents (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael,** vest by **Givenchy,** Vintage pocket watch with custom watch chain from **Dapper Dan Michael,** pants by **Ralph Lauren.** Shirt is Easy's own.

THE DRINKS

BY JOY SUMMERS

The idea of hiring a bartender of name for a wedding might be new to Minnesotans. We're a humble sort, so naming a drink slinger and branding your big day's booze might not be at the fore of our minds. To shatter your ideas of event cocktails, we give you the easy way out.

Erik Eastman folds his nattily dressed, lanky frame atop a barstool and leans in, requesting a martini. The pristine cocktail is the yardstick that bartenders judge their brethren upon. Have a bottle of old, room-temperature vermouth? The top-shelf talent will likely switch to a craft beer. Treat them right and you'll earn their respect forever.

Eastman comes by his bar pour cred from his own forged path. Easy, as he's commonly called, began his successful local business perched on a barstool, soaking up drink knowledge like a sponge. He dove into the bitters business with Dan Oskey (well-known bar talent from The Strip Club Meat & Fish and Hola Arepa), and his uncle, packaging expert, James Eastman.

The three created Easy & Oskey bitters kits, which have since been featured all over the food-loving world from *Food & Wine* to *Food 52* to the *Splendid Table* to MPR, where Easy is a regular contributor. His velvet voice guides us through the techniques for a stellar negroni or classic sazerac.

The Easy & Oskey kits are easily customizable or made with their unique blends of real ingredients and spices. Unlike most commercially produced bitters, these use actual vanilla and citrus peels, the grapefruit bitters are the sort of thing you never knew you couldn't live without in your home bar. The kits come with almost everything you need (you have to buy the over-proof alcohol separately) to create the bitters.

In addition to the kits, Easy has become a cocktail party secret weapon. He does cocktail consulting, teaches private classes, and can create a custom cocktail for your event. At a recent party I threw, Easy concocted a tea-infused gimlet, available in both alcoholic and n/a pours. It was divine and while I'd like to think the company I assembled and food served had an impact, those cocktails made the party.

Wouldn't that be a glorious addition to an engagement fête or reception? Elegant cocktails made easy are the way of the future.

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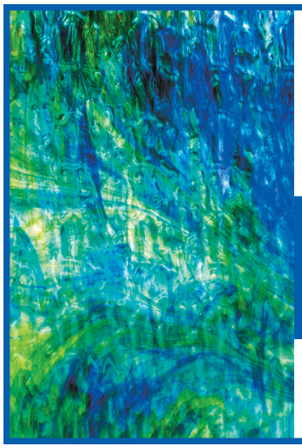
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Gimlet Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz Dry Gin (such as Tanqueray or The Botanist)
- 1 oz fresh lime juice
- .75 oz Chervil Pink Peppercorn Simple Syrup*
- 1/4 tsp Easy & Oskey Cherry Vanilla Bitters

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with clean ice. Shake 10 seconds to combine and chill, and strain through a small fine mesh strainer into a cocktail glass. Garnish with a paper-thin lime wheel if desired and/or sprig of chervil.

*Simple Syrup: Combine 1 cup each of sugar and water in a pan over medium-high heat, stirring until dissolved. Add a large handful of fresh chervil (an herb with a pleasant, subtle anise flavor) and 2 tablespoons crushed pink peppercorns. Allow to steep off the heat for at least one hour. Strain through a fine mesh strainer. Syrup will keep several weeks in the refrigerator.





Custom upcycled **NeverDown** three-piece navy blue suit with irridescent under-collar, with matching custom-made leather and irridescent bowtie (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael.** The Gimlet includes **Easy & Oskey** Bitters, Dry Gin, Pink Peppercorn Simple Syrup, and Fresh Lime Juice, shown here.

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THE FOOD

BY JONATHON WIPFLI

As a chef in Minnesota, I try to make the most of the short growing season we have by using what's in season and what I can hunt and gather from our landscape (with the exception of seafood, which I will touch on later). What seems to be a trendy, local food movement is how I've approached food my entire life, so it only makes sense that I approach food in the same way with The Minnesota Spoon and large-scale events such as weddings or holiday parties. It's a passion of mine and where my expertise lies. Using high-quality, seasonal food leads to diversity in menu creation, clean-tasting flavors, and provides a direct connection to what we eat. It also lets me use very simple techniques to let the quality of the ingredients shine through. I'll walk you through examples and tips for your own menu, whether you make it yourself for your own intimate affair or you hire a caterer or restaurant. It will give you the best of what's available in the spring and summer months.

With The Minnesota Spoon I approach catering a little differently for large events. We do our best to not have any food held warm, but, rather, cook food in small batches to order. We strive for the freshest seafood possible, using a company located in New York called Sea2Table. They connect us directly to docks that provide us with daily catches and overnight-ship the seafood to us. It's a great way to ensure the best seafood possible in the middle of the country. We are also lucky enough in Minneapolis to have some great access to farms and farmers markets which let us get some incredible ingredients.

Typically we run large events one of two ways. The first way is a little less formal and allows for a free-flowing meal by breaking the meal down into stations. There are multiple stations that people can visit and try different foods, there is no specific timeline for dinner and there is no formal sit-down. The foods are prepared in small batches by the chef or chefs running that station and served throughout the night. People can mill about and socialize with each other and the chefs without any pressure to have a sit-down meal.

The second way is a little more traditional where we break the meal down into courses and have a sit-down dinner. This generally begins with some passed appetizers, such as a couple of toasts, and a cocktail before the ceremony. After the ceremony, more cocktails and dinner follows. I'll give a few examples of seasonal menu possibilities for each course.

Generally, each meal is split into three courses. You can have a passed appetizer as people mill around with drinks or save all the food for the dinner portion. Guests often like to nosh on something while the movement happens between ceremony and reception site and I find that seasonal crudités and toasts with oysters can fill that gap well, particularly with how fun it is to slurp oysters with family and friends. But for the second and third courses, we're aiming for more of the sit-down eatables.

May and June is when things really start to get good in Minnesota. Asparagus, morels, baby kale, beans, summer squash, and spring herbs start to appear. Everything is incredibly fresh and green-tasting after getting out of the winter months. It's a perfect time for simple, lighter fare that people can really dig into. It's a great opportunity to cook some seafood and utilize

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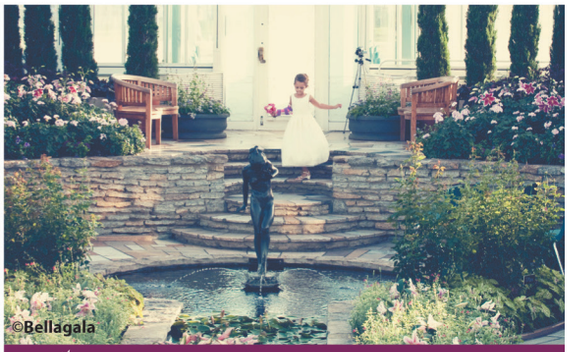


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For this issue I made three different courses. The first, of course, is an oyster course. Oysters are in my top three all-time favorite foods and I source oysters using Sea2Table which allows me access to truly fresh oysters and it's a perfect opportunity for a delicious first course. For the second course, a rabbit terrine with pickles preserved from winter and dijon mustard sounds like good fare, and for the entrée a grilled buffalo with a light salad of asparagus, peas, and radish in a champagne vinaigrette fits in well.

Other in-season menu options may include:

FIRST COURSE (PASSED)
- Braised duck meatballs, rhubarb jam
- Stewed morel mushrooms, and pickled ramps on toast

SECOND COURSE
- Grilled asparagus, sauce gribiche, pancetti
- Braised cow tongue, pea puree, and watercress

THIRD COURSE
- Chicken legs braised with slow-cooked leeks, saffron and garlic with potato puree
- Whole-roasted ribeye, warm spinach, and sauce chimichurri

Moving into July, lettuces, broccoli, melons, peas, peppers, and zucchini are among some of the vegetable options. Finding some ultra-fresh greens at the farmers market and serving them with a simple vinaigrette and shaving some local cheese over them is a perfect first course, but there are other options too. Here are a few of them.

FIRST COURSE (PASSED)
- Foie gras butter and raspberry jam brioche sandwiches
- Grilled oyster mushroom skewers, herb vinaigrette

SECOND COURSE
- Mixed lettuces, champagne vinaigrette, fine herbs, shaved parmesan
- Chilled scallop mousseline, salad of peas, radish and grilled summer squash, crème fraiche, and bacon

THIRD COURSE
- Grilled chicken paillard, anchovy and garlic marinated cucumbers, grain salad
- Whole-roasted bone-in pork loin, grilled broccoli, garlic butter

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summer where the temperatures begin to drop, the days start to shorten, and the heart and soul of Midwest cooking comes back. Corn and tomatoes make their way onto our plates and into our hearts, just as they should. There is plenty of food growing at this time of year, but for me it doesn't get any better than those two. For whatever reason, the beginning of fall also makes me think of family-style eating, which translates well for weddings. I think it's the sense that we all know we're going to have to hunker down and use each other as crutches to make it through the next six months until we see the first ramps again.

FIRST COURSE (PASSED)

- Cup of corn, Mexican-style
- Grilled shrimp skewers, pumpkin butter, chives

SECOND COURSE

- Cherry tomatoes, anchovy aioli, baby basil, torn bread
- Baked root vegetable salad, gremolata, cured foie gras, pistachios

THIRD COURSE

- Whole grilled salmon, sauce romanesco, roasted Brussels sprouts, boiled and seared potatoes served family-style
- Whole grilled baby pig, (deboned and stuffed with herbs) sweet corn succotash, lemon butter served family-style

Please visit my Instagram or Facebook page @TheMinnesotaSpoon for food inspiration, and visit TheMinnesotaSpoon.com for contact information.

THE CAKE

"Avant-garde Ruffles," shown here, is a classic white cake filled with raspberries and homemade chocolate mousse, finished with a light coating of real buttercream and rolled fondant icing.

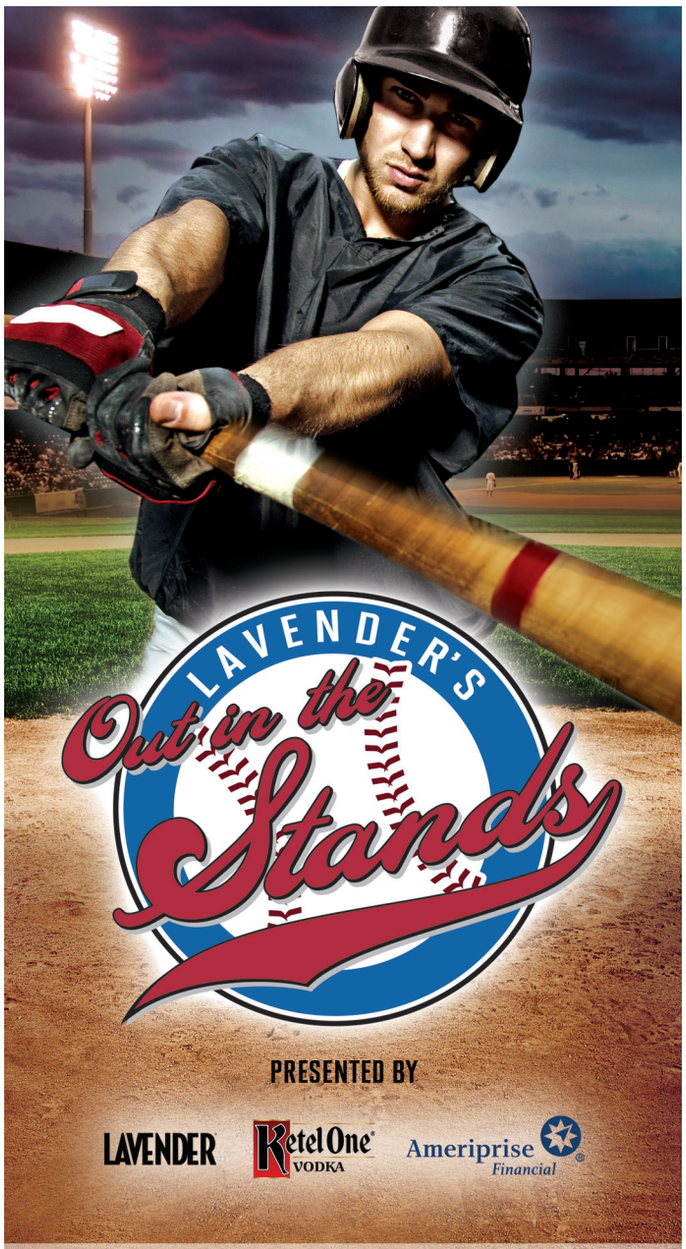
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(left to right) Decorative Kurta (pricing available upon request) by **Shashank Devsare** and vintage peacock pin from **Dapper Dan Michael.** Custom upcycled double-breasted navy blue tuxedo with satin trim ($225) from **Dapper Dan Michael.**



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(from left to right) Custom-made suit by **Astor & Black** with gold paisley under-collar (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael;** Boutonniere by **Flora Bella.** Custom upcycled **NeverDown** three-piece navy blue suit with irridescent under-collar, with matching custom-made leather and irridescent bowtie (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael.** Custom-made black tuxedo, upcycled white tuxedo shirt with silver Aztec buttons (pricing available upon request) from **Dapper Dan Michael;** Boutonniere by **Flora Bella.**

THE SUIT

BY SHANE LUECK

Your wedding day should be the day that you feel most like yourself. Or, at least that's how DanMichael Batista sees it. With his company, Dapper Dan Michael, Batista works to create custom looks for your wedding day (or the everyday). "I think a lot of people make the mistake of thinking they have to 'dress up' for their wedding," he says. "I'm talking about that feeling like you're putting on a costume, like you're trying to be someone you're not."

A good wedding look will make you feel like you've enhanced who you are, not covered it up. That's how Batista always hopes clients feel when they work with him. Through his image consulting services as well as his Hidden Haberdashery store in the Blaisdell Mansion, Batista specializes in custom-tailored, unique, one-of-a-kind, upcycled vintage and resale clothing.

Batista has close relationships with a number of secondhand and resale stores around the Twin Cities and, of course, he's always got his eye out for unique, top-quality vintage and designer clothing that can be customized to stand out.

Being that Batista creates custom, tailored looks, timing can range from three to five business days for a blazer to much longer for a wedding look. If a client wants to do a fully custom suit or tuxedo (for a wedding, for example), the production time for a look like that varies widely depending on many factors, including the client's size and how intricate the detailing of the garment will be, so Batista says it's hard to ballpark it without talking to clients and getting to know some more details. His advice? Leave as much time as possible.

Anyone utilizing Batista and his skilled eye doesn't have to feel pigeon-holed into one style. As Batista explains, his aesthetic is pretty broad and can cover a wide range of styles. "I can work with someone who has classic style and just wants a really beautiful and well-fitted black tux, or I can work with someone who likes to mix it up and try out a short suit or a colorful collar," he says.

"A well-placed pocket watch or broach, a stand-out colorful tie, a surprise pattern under a collar, or a bright pair of socks that peek out when a man sits down or puts his leg up can completely make an outfit and make someone stand out for all the right reasons. I think my job is to figure out who someone is and help them create the unique wardrobe that's going to make them feel like a million bucks when they go on that next job interview or date, or are simply walking down the street. That's my goal: to clothe people in confidence." And confidence is key on your wedding day.

According to Batista, the process for suiting a male body and a female body is much more similar than one might think. Anytime you buy clothing off-the-rack it's not going to be made for your body so tailoring is always required to get the perfect fit, whether that body is more masculine or more feminine.

"I always recommend that you go to someone who knows how to make a garment from scratch," Batista says. "I liken it to the difference between someone who can change your oil vs. someone who can rebuild your engine — it's the same with clothing, you want to be working with someone who knows how to take your whole garment apart and put it back together to fit you as if it was made for you. Whether you're a man or a woman, your body is uniquely yours and your clothes should be as unique as you are. My motto is: 'Get the perfect fit for the perfect you.'"

To schedule an appointment, contact The Hidden Haberdashery at 612-615-3553.
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photography by noah wolf



"Alisa" dress ($4350) by **YolanCris,** Austen Belt ($750) by **Johanna Johnson,** vintage accessories, and custom veil (pricing available upon request) from **The White Room.**

THE VENUE

BY SHANE LUECK



Each wedding begins with a vision. Some people have a whole vision scrapbook put together, others have a Pinterest board. No matter what pieces are included in your vision, you're well-aware that the venue sets the tone for the whole event. As the backdrop against which the entire wedding is set, it is often what most couples lock down first.

300 Clifton could be that place. The house was built in 1887 by C.M. Douglas, who owned a coal delivery business. Built in the Queen Anne style, with prominent porches and a turret in the southeast, the mansion has gone through many lives.

The house was purchased in 1905 by Eugene and Merrette Carpenter and was owned by the family until 1948. This constitutes the historically significant time period. Eugene Carpenter and Merrette Lamb came from lumber milling families and were owners of the Carpenter-Lamb Lumber Co. of Minneapolis. The Carpenters were also significant patrons of the arts and Eugene Carpenter played a pivotal role in establishing the Minneapolis Institute of A rts.

Since then, the home has switched residents multiple times (even had a stint as an office building for awhile), before current owners Norman and John bought it in September 2013 with a vision.

"While doing research before purchasing, we discovered the home's amazing backstory," Norman says. "We decided it would be too selfish for us just to live here by ourselves, so we decided to tell the story through the bed and breakfast."

In 2014 the couple legally changed the use of the house back to a residence and established it as a Bed & Breakfast. It is currently a six-room bed and breakfast, complete with a salon/spa, which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2015.

Norman and John's passion comes from the guests' enjoyment of the space as well as giving back not only to the neighborhood, but Minneapolis itself. This commitment to guests is clear throughout their entire practice. They offer a completely customizable experience: with no preferred vendors, guests are encouraged to bring in whoever makes their event the wedding of their dreams. Guests are also welcome to decorate as they wish and Norman and John will rearrange any furniture for special accommodations.

That being said, not much outside decoration needs to be brought in, the mansion itself provides a lot of that already.

"Our main mansion has its original 1906 layout complete with formal dining room, library, grand drawing room, front and side hallways, second floor library, grand staircase, oak paneled hallways, Tiffany fixtures, and crystal chandeliers," Norman says. "We are one of the very few mansions restored on the Loring Hill. Most venues get very commercial, we are and will always be a house."

With that mansion aesthetic in mind, guests are sure to love all of the touches throughout the space. Namely, the main house interior is lavishly decorated with period lighting and crystal chandeliers, the outdoors lit with lampposts.

Furniture rearranging is not the only way the owners are willing to customize the space. Which rooms are used for what is also up to guest discretion. Although they recommend the grand drawing room for a band or dance floor, the rest of the space can be utilized as the guest sees fit. For example, all of the bed and breakfast's guest rooms can be used for many different things, from getting ready the day-of to overnight guests. Norman and John are ready and willing to help you see how every aspect of your wedding can be done at 300 Clifton: rehearsal dinner, rehearsal dinner, ceremony, reception…the options are endless.

Even the size of your event is up for negotiation. Norman says that they've housed up to 300 people before. Although smaller crowds may be most comfortable in the space, larger sizes are also doable, depending on the flow of people and the use of space.

To set up an appointment, contact 300 Clifton at 504-450-1466.
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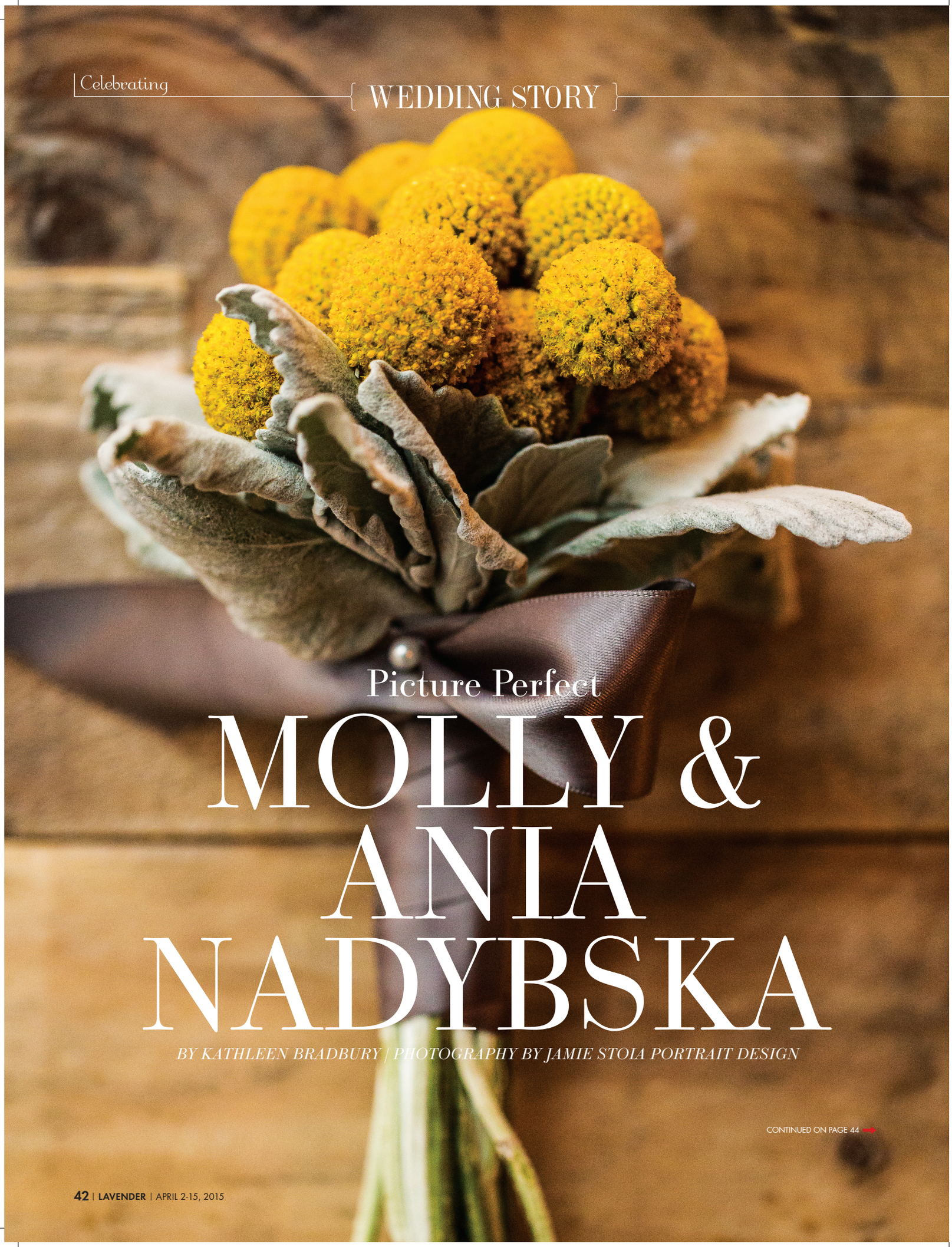
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MOLLY & ANIA NADYBSKA

BY KATHLEEN BRADBURY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMIE STOIA PORTRAIT DESIGN

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

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"A Polish girl and an Iowan farm girl walk into a movie…"

What may sound like the start of a bad joke is actually how Molly and Ania's love story begins. Ten years ago, Molly was working as a business manager for her sister's restaurant when Ania, a new server, walked past with a training group. Though Ania caught Molly's eye when she walked by, it was her thick Polish accent that captured Molly's attention. Molly recalls, "When she stood up and said something, I was like, 'I'm in love with this girl'…I didn't even know her. I heard her speak, and I knew I wanted to date her."

After weeks of flirting, Molly asked Ania out on a date. In an attempt to impress Ania, Molly planned to take her to an epic period piece movie. The women quickly realized something was strange when "the previews started, and one preview kept going and going…we realized we went to the wrong movie." What they thought was an artsy period piece was actually *Napoleon Dynamite*. The women laughed through what became their favorite movie, and they've been laughing together ever since.

The women quickly fell in love with each other. Ania was drawn to Molly's personality and sense of humor. Molly valued and respected Ania's Polish culture and loved Ania's winning smile. They became partners in life and business by turning their shared love of photography into their own studio, am photography. When they aren't working their full-time jobs (Molly is a social media specialist, and Ania is a director of online content strategy and branding), the dream duo works together to capture everyday moments and special events.

After several years of dating, Molly decided that she wanted to take the next step. When the couple traveled to Costa Rica in 2009 with Molly's sister and brother-in-law, Molly planned the perfect proposal. With the help of her sister, Molly scheduled a horseback-riding excursion that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

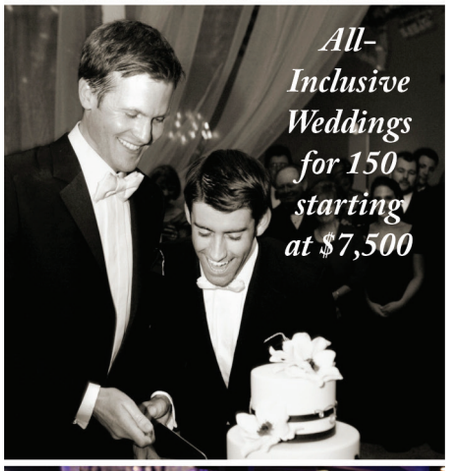






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{ Ania and Molly were asked many questions leading up to the wedding, including the classic lesbian wedding question— "Who's wearing the dress?" }

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48





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promised to end at the base of a glorious waterfall. The excursion ended after a hot, sticky, and sweaty ride through the jungle, when they arrived at the most disappointing waterfall the women had ever seen. "It was a total letdown because it was the dry season," Molly recalls. "The waterfall was really just a trickle, and the water below was green and nasty."

With the encouragement of her sister, Molly decided to go forward with the proposal as planned. Molly's sister herded all the tourists away so the women could share a private moment by the lackluster waterfall. Ania had no idea what was going on until Molly got down on one knee and asked her "Will you marry me?" in Polish. Ania recalls, "I was very impressed because in Polish, 'Will you marry me?' is very dependent on the gender and the time of the proposal. You can say it so many different—and so many wrong—ways. She said it perfectly."Ania joyously agreed, and the couple celebrated their engagement.

After ten years of being together (and a four-year engagement), Molly and Ania tied the knot on December 13, 2014. The women had a casual ceremony and reception at Spill the Wine in Uptown Minneapolis. Ania notes, "We wanted it to be with the people we love…full of love, emotion, and humor."

One humorous aspect that made quite an impression on guests was the program. Ania and Molly were asked many questions leading up to the wedding, including the classic lesbian wedding question—"Who's wearing the dress?" The women took all those questions and provided funny yet informative answers in their Practical Guide for Attending a Lesbian Wedding. The program also introduced the wedding party in an unconventional way; Molly and Ania flipped their guests' expectations around through a mugshot-themed bridal party photo.

The couple worked closely with Todd Pinzuti from Bungalow 6, an event design and décor company that hopes to become the go-to group for GLBT weddings, to completely transform their venue to capture their dream feel. Todd describes the wedding's aesthetic as "hipster lesbian chic with a color story of grey and yellow." As a full-service décor company, Bungalow 6 designs all aspects of events, starting with an initial concept all the way through to the execution of the vision.

In order to create a casual, cocktail lounge atmosphere, Pinzuti and his crew removed Spill the Wine's existing furniture and brought in new lounge furniture. They also created unique floral arrangements, table settings, and a jaw-dropping star backdrop that twinkled behind the women as they exchanged vows.

Before the women arrived, guests were invited to enjoy a cocktail hour and relax in the space. Ania remembers waiting behind the curtain and getting ready to enter the space: "Everyone knew we were there and there was an epic rush of adrenaline and excitement. Everyone was cheering for us. Walking down and seeing all the people we know in the same room was amazing."

As a way to reflect their individual personalities, the women wrote their own vows, incorporating five statements of love and five promises to the other. The crowd went wild when Ania said, "I love you more than Starbucks," and Molly countered with, "I love you more than bacon." Through laughter and heartfelt sentiments, the two professed their love and were married.

Two very special moments stood out for Ania, whose family was not able to travel from Poland for the event. Ania's sister virtually attended the wedding via Skype, and Ania was extremely moved by the surprise. Additionally, Molly's nephew walked Ania down the aisle, a moment that truly depicted the blending of their families.

The couple turned to the skills and talents of their friends to plan their wedding in less than six months. Molly's nieces sang a song during the ceremony, and Regina, a mutual friend, got ordained in order to preside over the wedding. Molly and Ania were also able to enjoy stepping out from behind their cameras and be the center of attention, and they entrusted their photography to Jamie Stoia, a lifestyle photographer and close friend.

Molly and Ania also incorporated several personal touches into their event. They planned a personalized menu with the help of Barbara DeVos, former manager at Spill the Wine. Ania created a signature martini with pear vodka and dry ice. The women also honored their grandmothers' memories through toasts with their grandmothers' favorite drinks—Molly sipped Pepsi while Ania slammed vodka.

Molly, Ania, and their guests danced the night away, and Molly says she had so much fun that she would get married again in a heartbeat. She adds, "It felt like a reception the whole time!" One additional element that added to the party feel was a choreographed flash mob, performed by the bridal party, serving staff, and a few brave guests. As the night drew to a close, guests were invited to take home a cozy blanket for some much needed relaxation time.

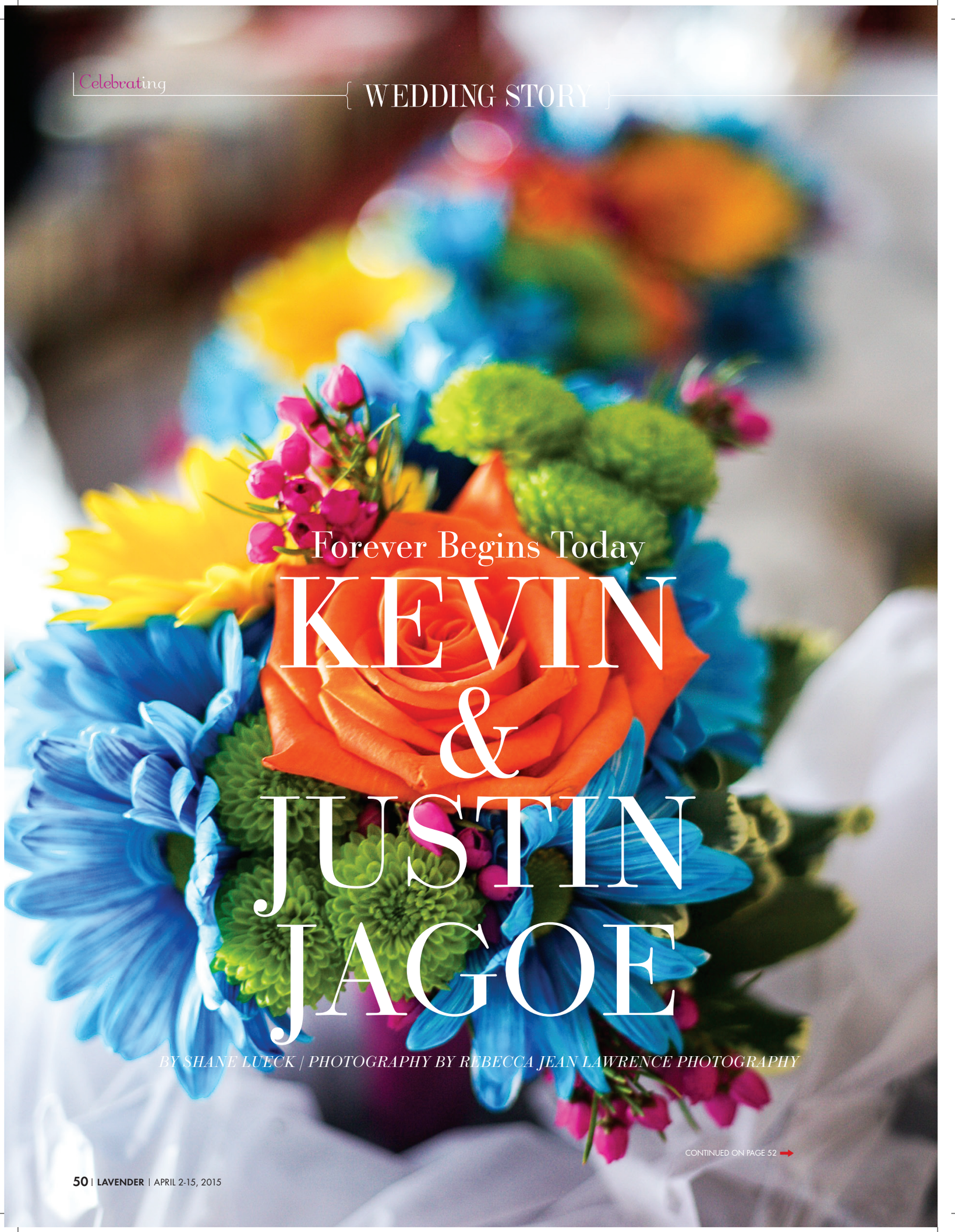
Looking to the future, Molly and Ania are excited to spend the rest of their lives in laughter and joy together. The women plan to have children and continue traveling, both around the world and around Eden Prairie on their scooters. Whatever the future brings, they know that their love will keep them going. But one thing is for sure: they will always end their night by saying "goodnight" in Polish, a special tradition that reminds them of the magic that happens when two women who were born thousands of miles apart find their home in the arms of each other. ■

RESOURCES

Photography: Jamie Stoia Portrait Design
Date of Wedding: December 13, 2014
Dating Since: September 6, 2004
Location of Ceremony/Reception: Spill the Wine
Florist: Bungalow 6 Design
Decor: Bungalow 6 Design
Stylist: Stephan Courtright of Wave Salon
DJ: SRS Groove
Invitations: Ania







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BY SHANE LUECK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA JEAN LAWRENCE PHOTOGRAPHY

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52



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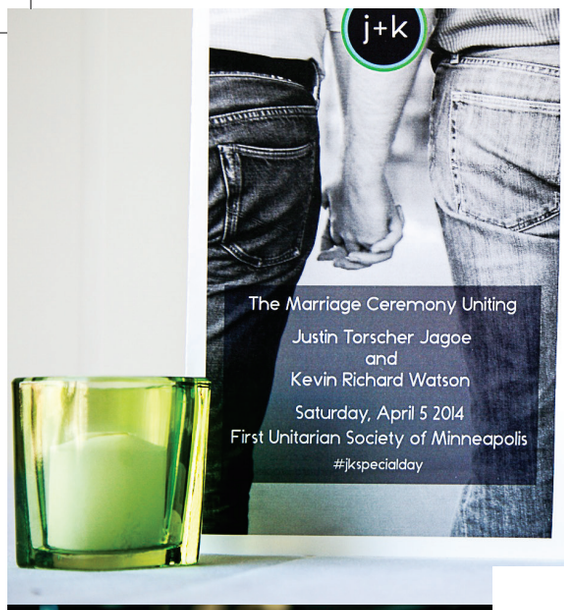
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{ WEDDING STORY }









People become politically involved for various reasons … finding a significant other is likely not one of them. But that's exactly what happened for Justin and Kevin Jagoe.

When answering the question, *How did you meet?*, Kevin's short answer is: "Through queer organizing on college campuses… and drinking at The Saloon." The long answer: when the two were in college (Kevin as a senior at Hamline University and Justin as a junior at the University of Minnesota), they met through a mutual friend, Alfonso Wenker, who ended up being Kevin's best man. Kevin had gotten to know Alfonso through working across various Twin Cities private colleges to coordinate GLBTQ programming.

Kevin says, "I went to The Saloon on a Thursday night — May 5, 2007 (Justin interrupts: 'It was *April* 5!') — intent on dancing and spending time with Hamline friends. I ran into Alfonso and his group of U of M friends. At some point in the evening, Alfonso literally pushed the two of us together to dance and that was how we met."

Justin is quick to add, "It doesn't sound terribly romantic to say we met at a bar, does it? But the truth is that we had a really immediate connection." In the week or so following the night that Alfonso pushed them together, Justin can't think of a single day they didn't see each other. "We just kept being with each other, spending time together, going out together, staying in together. What I love about our story is how gradually it grew into something so wonderful. Kevin went in my mind from being this really fun guy to being somebody I suddenly realized I was in love with, to being the person I *needed* in my life."

Kevin must have felt the same way, because five years later, they found themselves in New York City as part of their anniversary weekend. Kevin proposed to Justin on a bluff overlooking Harlem Meer, a lake in Central Park, before spending the rest of the week around Manhattan, visiting restaurants and taking in *Wicked* on Broadway.

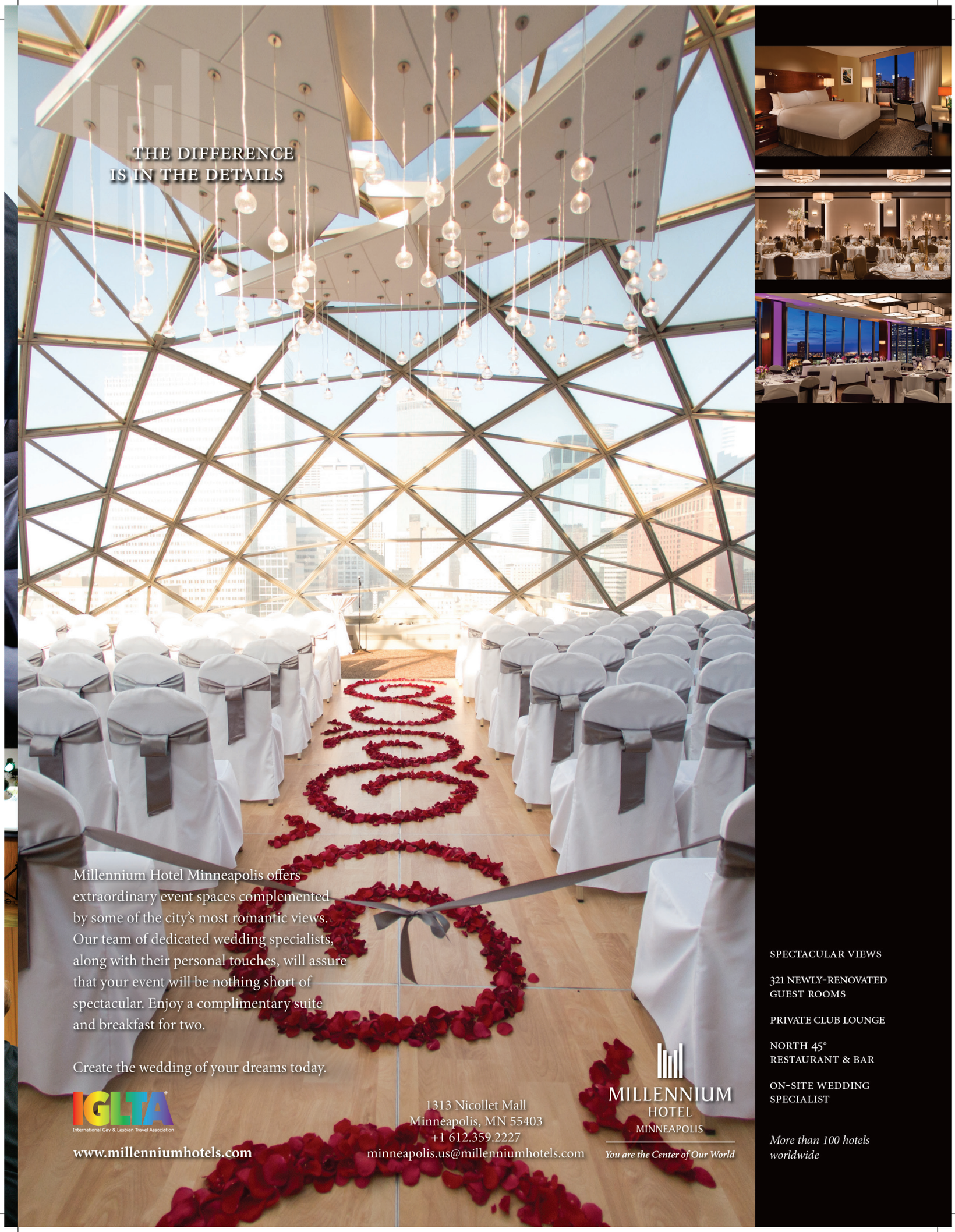
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"It was important to both of us to have our ceremony reflect our deeply held beliefs and values,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



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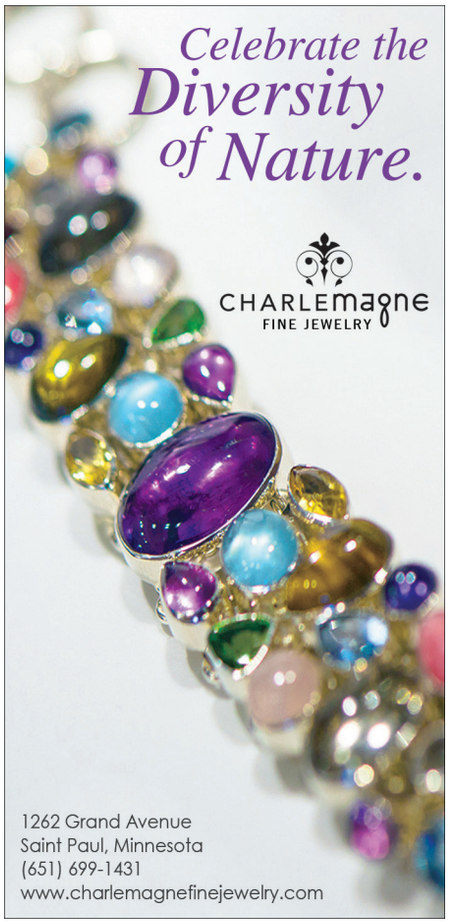
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Tangletown Gardens



"It wasn't his first choice to propose to me there," Justin shares. "We spent half our trek around Central Park looking for a particular flower garden that Google Maps *assured* him would be there. A few times I asked if we could be done walking, but Kevin was strangely adamant about finding it. We never did find that garden, but I have a hard time thinking it could be better than being proposed to while overlooking Harlem Meer."

When it came time to plan the wedding, the couple formed a committee with the two of them and Justin's sister and cousin, who had both planned weddings with family members before. Their friends, Alfonso and Ryan Kroenig (who is the owner and principal of Events by Lady K), also have been a part of event planning for a number of years, so the couple had a lot of resources at their disposal.

Incidentally, the committee began planning precisely 400 days before the wedding — a complete coincidence, but an interesting one nonetheless. "We actually took minutes, defined roles, volunteered to undertake tasks, maintained guest databases, and corresponded via email between meetings," Justin says. "In retrospect, all the over-organizing was a good call; very little, if anything, got missed, and there were no real blow-ups or altercations or misunderstandings or hurt feelings in the planning process. It really worked out swell!"

That level of involvement was natural for the committee, made up of multiple event planners. Ryan was part of the entire planning process in the most literal sense: he went along with Kevin when he went engagement ring shopping to propose to Justin. "They are two of my best friends, and I was honored to be not only their wedding planner, but part of Kevin's wedding party," Ryan says.

Beyond that, he even assisted with venue selection for their reception (identifying potential locations, setting up tours, and being the on-site contact the day of the wedding), was part of the menu planning and tasting process, created the flow of the day, and ensured all the details were taken care of. There's more: he assisted with vendor selection for décor, such as uplighting and linen rentals, registry website to support their Paris honeymoon, and designed and provided the centerpieces. Ryan, with Events by Lady K, was the event planner du jour (and more!).

And what an event it was! Kevin has been doing marketing and branding for organizations for a number of years, so he took the lead in creating the color palette, logo, typography, etc. "Justin definitely had input along the way but really we had a similar aesthetic for the wedding and there wasn't a whole lot of need to give and take throughout the planning process," Kevin says. "We wanted things to have a clean, modern look, using bright colors that helped convey a sense of fun for our day."

To which Justin responds, "Kevin's being *way* too charitable in his assessment of my input. The truth is that I am NOT much of an aesthete or stylist. At least, I knew I wouldn't have nearly as strong of opinions on the colors, logos, or typography of the ceremony as he would. I actually think I left Kevin completely beside himself one evening when he asked for my opinions on colors, and I more or less said 'I dunno… blue's nice, I guess.'"

But of course, Justin completely trusted Kevin's sense of style, and completely trusted the rest of the committee to say what worked and what didn't. As far as his own original contributions to the ceremony, Justin confesses he's a bit of a movie geek, and Kevin was kind enough to let him figure out the musical selections (mostly, they were music pieces from the scores of movies he enjoys, like the Studio Ghibli animated films, a piece from the Pixar movie *Up*, and one piece by Dvorak that Justin absolutely adores.

According to Ryan, the aesthetic was very "Modern Geek Chic," very sleek and consistent. It was based on the logo Kevin designed that appeared on everything from their save-the-date to the day-of programs. They even created a hashtag, #JKSpecialDay, like the social-media-savvy millennials they are.

"I had a very strong idea that we carry our branding through from the engagement party to the honeymoon," Kevin says. "I've always enjoyed brand consistency and doing this sort of work so being able to bring that to our celebration meant a lot to me. Once we chose our color palette and fonts, I created a logo and we built the rest of the wedding materials from there."

Ryan says, "The bright color scheme of aqua and lime green influenced the pops of color that were prominent but not over-the-top." Each man had a color for the wedding (Justin's was that aqua Ryan was talking about and Kevin's was lime green) that was carried through each side of the wedding party as well as their individual clothing and boutonnieres. They also had custom shoes done for all of the guys in the wedding party to help make the guys' clothes more interesting.

The pops of color worked beautifully, from the traditional appearance of colors throughout the wedding party in dresses, suit accents, and flowers, to the trendy details with contrasting color custom-Converse shoes. The colors were carried throughout the reception venue in alternating uplighting along the walls, napkins at each place setting, and centerpieces of candles. Each of them had one special and personal touch they wanted as part of the celebration: Kevin's love of penguins, which appeared in the cake topper, and Justin's love of Star Wars, which he used to created table signs denoted by references from the movies.

It's clear that the men worked hard to make the ceremony reflect each person individually as well as part of a couple. Their choice in ceremony venue (First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis) and officiant (Rev. Dr. David Breeden) helped bring in their Humanist values, while their reception venue (American Swedish Institute) allowed the nearly 200 guests space to celebrate.

"It was important to both of us to have our ceremony reflect our deeply held beliefs and values," Kevin says. "We didn't want to use clergy from the religions of either of our childhoods and we wanted something other than a strictly secular ceremony."

For now, the couple is focusing on their advanced degrees. Kevin is on track to earn his masters in nonprofit management from Hamline this spring. Once that happens, he will be studying to enter the seminary to become a Unitarian Universalist/Humanist minister. He'll have to take on an internship someplace — which means, possibly, they'll be heading out of state, but it'll be a great adventure.

As for Justin, he's got about a semester and a half before work begins on his thesis for his MFA in writing (also at Hamline) with a focus in creative nonfiction. Fortunately, he is able to work on his thesis remotely if needed.

"If we end up moving for Kevin's internship, I'll have something to do while he becomes a minister," Justin says. "And who knows after that! Maybe a family? We've talked about it, but we've not yet talked about it enough." ■

RESOURCES:

Wedding Planner: Events by Lady K

Photography: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography

Florist: Lexington Floral

Jewelry: Danny Sathoff Designs

Suits: Wedding Chapel Bridals in New Hope

Shoes: Converse Custom Design

Invitations/Stationery: Designed by Kevin, www.HumanistNotes.com

Linens/Tableware: Accents from Linen Effects, everything else from American Swedish Institute

Lighting: Uplighting by EMI Audio





{ MARKETPLACE }

BY LYNN INGRID NELSON AND KRISTEN REBOLLO

Those who appreciate the craftsmanship of items that are handmade are already anticipating the 29th annual American Craft Council (ACC) show April 10-12 at RiverCentre in St. Paul. ACC followers have their favorite artists, and love visiting with them among the 240 booths that transform RiverCentre into a potpourri of eye-popping jewelry, clothing, and home décor items from across the country.

Show goers often prepare shopping lists in advance, so they can buy special one-of-a-kind gifts for weddings and birthdays in the coming year. ACC Marketing Director Pamela Diamond has the benefit of working with ACC artists at shows in Baltimore, Atlanta, San Francisco and St. Paul. She has a discerning eye, and has hand-picked just a few of her favorite wedding gifts, rings, and fashions for *Lavender* readers from this year's ACC collection.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 60 ➡

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7. MARGO PETITTI | MARGO PETITTI INC.
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Young hand-dyes her silk fiber yarn to create these intriguing scarves and shawls. Young's original wearable pieces of art make for a perfect gift for the brides' or grooms' mothers. And black and white is especially trend-worthy this season.



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9. LINDA SENECHAL | STUDIO TESSERE
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BELIZE

A HONEYMOON HOTSPOT

BY KATHLEEN BRADBURY

By the time our honeymoon rolled around, my wife, Krissy, and I were more than ready to switch our snow boots for sandals. Even though we got married in August, we had to delay our honeymoon until winter, which gave us the perfect excuse to go somewhere warm and sunny. We settled on Belize, a small country in Central America with plenty of unique experiences to offer. We fell in love with Belize and the people we met along the way. Belize is a country that truly has something for everyone. Whether you want to relax on a beach at an all-inclusive resort or trek through the jungle and crawl through Mayan caves, you can find what you're looking for in Belize.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64 ➡

VACATIONS



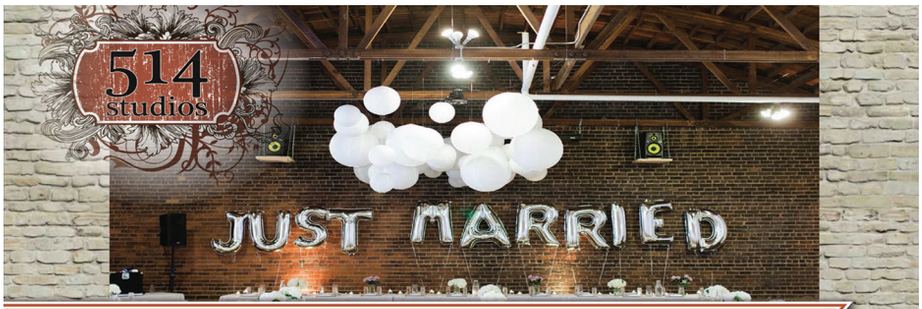
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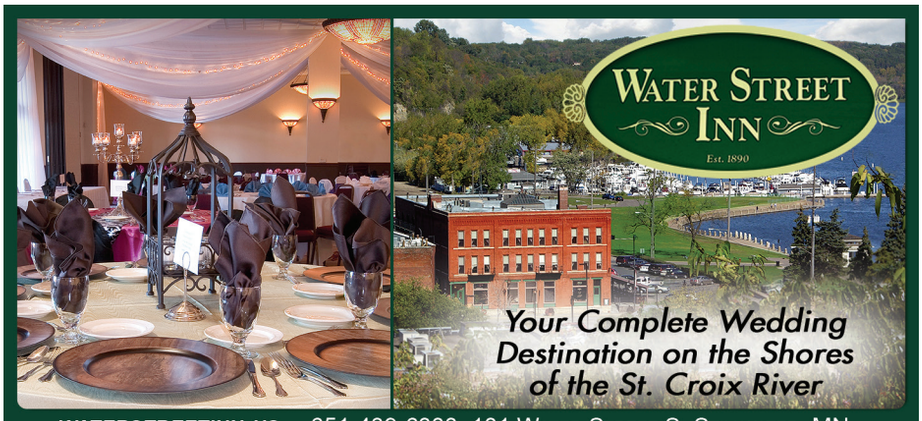
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(Clockwise from top left) A storm caught us as we returned from snorkeling; photo by Krissy Bradbury. The ruins at Caracol are nestled within the jungle in the Cayo District; Treehouses at Parrot Nest Lodge allow guests to experience the jungle in a whole new way; photo by Krissy Bradbury.

Krissy and I are active and adventurous travelers who value good food and unique experiences. We are mindful about our travel budget and prioritize adventure over luxury. We tend to stray from the beaten path, and here are some Belizean treasures we discovered along the way.

Belize is split up into different districts, each with a unique atmosphere. Although tourists often spend most of their time on the islands (Cayes) of Belize, the mainland districts have plenty of adventures to offer. Two hours mainland, located in the Cayo District, San Ignacio is a bustling little town that serves as a cultural and local hub for tourists and locals. We split our two-week trip evenly between the Cayo District and the islands, giving us the perfect balance of adventure and relaxation time.

No matter what area of Belize you're in, it is easy to get around and do business with the locals. Most Belizeans speak English and Spanish to tourists, but they will converse with each other in laid-back Kriol. The Belizean dollar is kept at a 2:1 exchange rate with the American dollar, so payment is a breeze.

Although homosexuality is banned and punishable by law in Belize, the locals assured us that the law was rarely inforced. There are several well-known GLBT-friendly and GLBT-run businesses in both the Cayo District and on the islands. During our travels, we ran into several GLBT couples—all of whom flocked to us because my equality tattoo acted as a homing device—and we shared our travel stories. Our experiences were all similar: none of us had experienced any discrimination, though we were all very aware of not being too overt in public. We all felt welcomed and safe as GLBT tourists.

There are plenty of transportation options available to get you safely around the country. We relied on William's Shuttle Company to travel between San Ignacio and Belize City. William and his crew shared their knowledge of Belize with us during the two-hour trek. If you want to travel like the locals, you can take the crowded buses between the cities, or you can rent a car if you're feeling particularly adventurous. The roads are not in the best of shape, and many roads to tourist attractions are downright treacherous. The islands can easily be reached by water taxi or by a short flight in a propeller plane.

While in the Cayo District, we stayed at Parrot Nest Lodge, a small bed and breakfast in the jungle near Bullet Tree village. Guests at Parrot Nest can choose to stay in private cabins or tree houses. Breakfast and dinner were fresh, hot, and served at communal tables where we bonded with other guests over the day's adventures. The lodge manager, Marcus, was able to set up last-minute excursions for us and made us feel at home. When we weren't off on our adventures, we enjoyed tubing down the river behind the lodge with our new friends and the dogs of Parrot Nest leading our way.

Although homosexuality is banned and punishable by law in Belize, the locals assured us that the law was rarely enforced.







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Though many travelers choose to cross into Guatemala to visit the awe-inspiring Tikal, there are several Mayan sites in Belize that are just as amazing and not as crowded. John, the owner of K'iin Winik Jungle Tours, transported us through the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve and to the ancient Mayan site, Caracol. Only 10% of Caracol is excavated, so the site seems more sacred and private. In addition to explaining the significance of his Mayan heritage, John shared some of the wisdom he learned from his grandfather, a Mayan medicine man, by pointing out the jungle's medicinal plants.

For adventurers who love the outdoors, Mountain Pine Ridge offers excellent hiking trails and horseback riding near Barton Creek Cave. Cliff jumpers can plummet into the clear waters beneath Big Rock Falls. We spent some time exploring Rio On Pools, a set of small waterfalls that collect in dozens of pools. The serene, cool waters were the perfect place to wash off the grime collected from the day's explorations.

The highlight of our time in the Cayo District was our experience at Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) cave. Though we visited several other cave systems, we both agree that ATM is by far the best. Not for the faint of heart, the strenuous trip to reach ATM requires a 45-minute jungle hike, crossing three rivers ranging from two to five feet deep. Once at the cave, explorers swim into the mouth of the cave, tracing the route the Mayans used to take during religious rituals and sacrifices.

After wading through dark waters, shimmying through narrow passageways, and scurrying up boulders, visitors are required to remove their shoes in order to enter the main dry chamber full of Mayan pottery and skeletons from sacrifices. The trip climaxes 1000 meters into the cave, in the Chamber of the Crystal Maiden, where the calcified skeleton of a young girl sparkles in the light of the headlamps. Nothing could have prepared us for the surreal eeriness of the cave. Simultaneously sublime and haunting, the ATM Cave is one attraction that must not be missed.

If you don't find crawling around in dark caves as enticing as we did, there are several other options for more low-key adventuring. Take a day trip to see the Mayan ruins at Xunantunich and Cahal Pech, or get up close and personal with iguanas at the Green Iguana Conservation Project in San Ignacio.

Our favorite thing about San Pedro was the abundance of delicious food.







(Clockwise from top right) A fried masa cake with stew chicken and pickled jalapeno are served piping hot at El Fogon; the shrimp po'boys at Blue Water are grilled to perfection; Palm trees sway in San Pedro; photos by Krissy Bradbury.



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(Clockwise from top left) A beach resort on Ambergris Caye; Keel-Billed Toucan with fruit in his beak.



After all of our adventuring in the jungle, we were excited to get to the island for some ultimate relaxation. We stayed in San Pedro, the main city on Ambergris Caye, known for its amazing food and non-stop nightlife. Our bed and breakfast, Changes in Latitude, was conveniently located within walking distance of the finest restaurants and beaches in San Pedro. After a tasty breakfast and a swim off the docks each morning, we set out to meander around the city and enjoy the sun. Although San Pedro is easily accessible by foot, many tourists choose to rent golf carts or bikes to explore the island more thoroughly. We borrowed bikes one day and spent a morning chasing the sunrise along the beach.

Our favorite thing about San Pedro was the abundance of delicious food. From Jamaican cuisine to fresh seafood, from the national dish of rice and beans with stew chicken to steaming hot pizza pies, there were enough impressive dining options to keep us satisfied. Our favorite restaurant on the island was El Fogon, a small open-air restaurant serving up hot salbutes and traditional Belizean dishes. After our third visit, the waiters knew us by name and hugged us when we waddled out of there with full tummies for the last time.

Other standout restaurants include Waraguma, where fresh papusas are lovingly made; Blue Water Grill, an upscale eatery with killer drinks; and Elvi's, where $20 can get a feast of barbecued ribs, chicken, and sausage fresh off the barbecue. Between meals, we snagged fresh coconut water and coconut ice cream, a much-needed

After all of our adventuring in the jungle, we were excited to get to the island for some ultimate relaxation.

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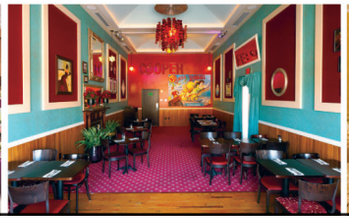


St. Louis Park has a long history of welcoming diversity. Just like our community, our private event facilities are just as unique. We have the space for your wedding, rehearsal dinner and bachelor or bachelorette party. We can also help you with hotel room blocks whether your event is held in St. Louis Park or nearby. Great hotels, hip restaurants and unique spaces welcome you and your guests with open arms. **Contact us for complimentary event assistance and for a free St. Louis Park event space guide.**

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(Clockwise from top left) Kathleen rides a zip line through the jungle canopy; a sunset booze cruise is the perfect ending to a perfect day; photos by Krissy Bradbury. Scuba diving in Blue Hole and Lighthouse Reef.

treat after being in the sun all day.

Belize is a mecca for divers and snorkelers, due to its location along the Belize Barrier Reef and its close proximity to Blue Hole. Companies offering dive and snorkel trips abound, but we chose to snorkel with Ecologic Divers because of their commitment to respecting and protecting the reef. Our guide took us to Hol Chan Marine Reserve, where we swam with fish and turtles at Hol Chan Cut before swimming with sharks and stingrays at Shark Ray Alley.

When we wanted a more laid-back island feel, we visited Caye Caulker, a nearby island easily accessible by water taxi. Known for the excellent swimming at The Split, Caye Caulker has a completely different vibe from the hustle and bustle of San Pedro. We spent a day strolling around the island and reading at The Split, where locals sell homemade meat pies and feed the seagulls by hand.

Our trip wouldn't have been complete without our sunset cruise on Ecologic Divers' 50-foot catamaran. Watching the sun set over the sparkling blue waters — rum punch in one hand and Krissy's hand in the other — was a perfect way to end the honeymoon of a lifetime.

Belize is the perfect honeymoon destination for any couple that wants to experience something completely different. Whether you want to relish in luxury at all-inclusive resorts or test your new marriage by going on thrill-seeking adventures, Belize is the perfect country to celebrate love and life. To start planning your dream vacation in Belize, visit www.travelbelize.org. ■

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APRYL & ASHLEY STORMS

Photographer: Summer Street Photography
Wedding Date: July 12, 2014
Location of Ceremony: The LeBlanc House
Location of Reception: The Red Stag
Florist: Rodger Beck Florist
Wedding Coordinator: Apryl, Ashley, their mothers and grandmothers
Cake: The Wedge Co-op Bakery
Suit: Brooks Brothers
Dress: Alex Bridal on Etsy
Hair: Salon Stella



















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LIZ & BRYCE BYRON

Photographer: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography
Wedding Date: April 27, 2013
Reception Date: May 3, 2014
Dating Since: February, 2012
Location of Ceremony: Lake Harriet Peace Garden
Location of Reception: Pinstripes
Florist: Liz & Bryce, flowers from farmers market
Wedding Coordinator: Liz & Bryce
Cake: Lucinda and Francesca



















VENESSA FUENTES & CRYSTAL BRINKMAN

Photographer: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography
Wedding Date: September 7, 2014
Dating Since: 2008
Location of Ceremony: Powderhorn Park
Location of Reception: Pillsbury Theater
Wedding Coordinator: Venessa & Crystal
Cake: Potluck Desserts

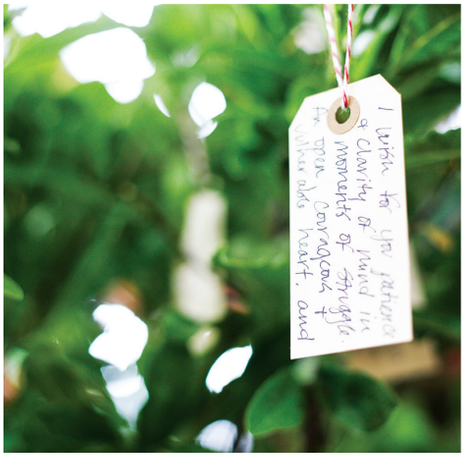






















DAVID HENDRICKSON & TREVOR CHARON

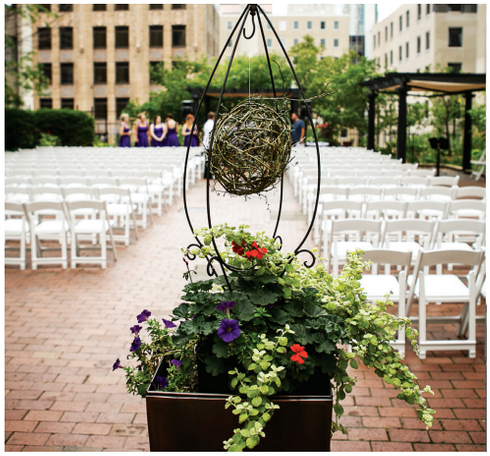
Photographer: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography
Wedding Date: August 2, 2014
Dating Since: 2011
Location of Ceremony: Northstar Crowne Plaza Hotel – Skygarden
Location of Reception: Crowne Plaza Great Lakes Ballroom
Wedding Coordinator: Events by Lady K
Cake: Keys Cafe
Invitations: Anne McClimmon















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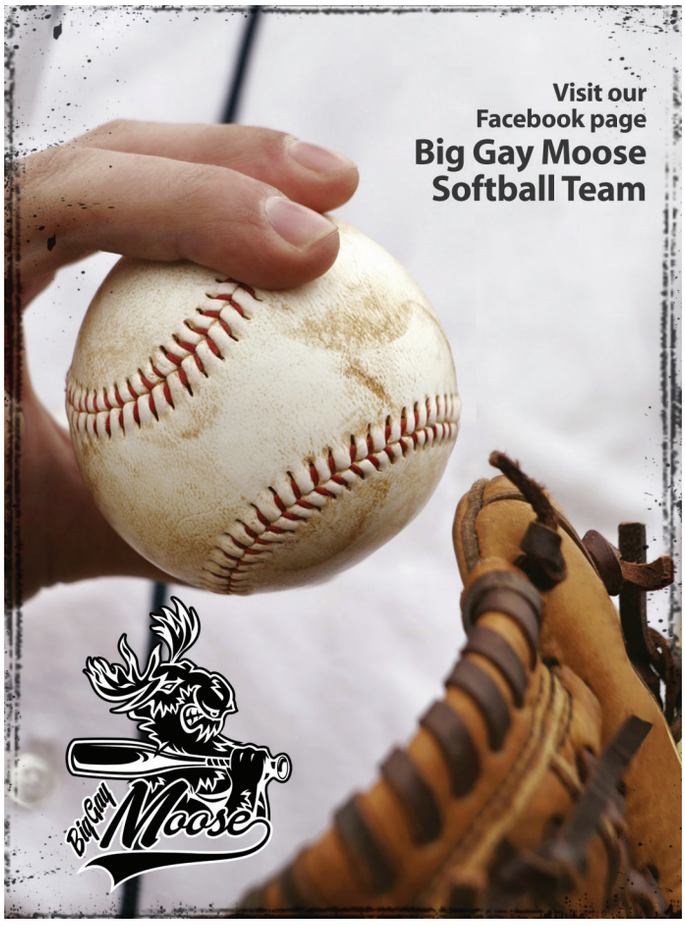
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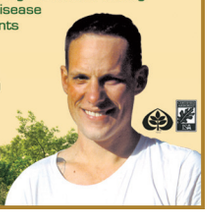
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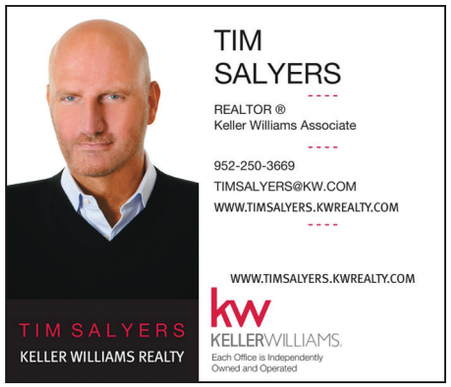


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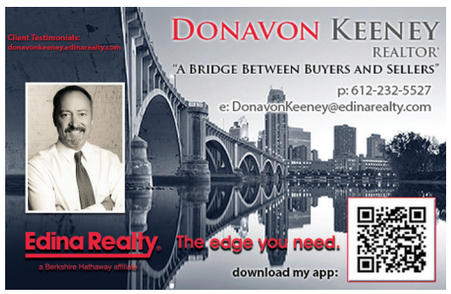


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(612) 870-4416
www.centralmpls.org

Edina Community Lutheran Church
Upbeat, growing congregation committed to inclusion, justice, peace, community and proclaiming God's YES to all.
4113 W. 54th St.
Edina, MN
(952) 926-3808
www.eclc.org

First Christian Church - Disciples of Christ
A Movement for Wholeness In A Fragmented World.
610 W. 28th St.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 870-1868
www.fccminneapolis.org

Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church
It's a new day at Hennepin Church! Vibrant Worship. Authentic Hospitality. Beloved Community.
511 Groveland Ave.
511 Groveland Ave.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 871-5303
www.hennepinchurch.org

New Life Presbyterian Church
Inclusive Christian faith community daring to live in Jesus' transforming love. Come and see.
965 Larpenteur Ave. W.
Roseville, MN 55113
(651) 488-5581
www.newlifechurchroseville.org

The House of Hope Presbyterian Church
A Covenant Network Congregation welcoming all people.
797 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN
(651) 227-6311
www.hohchurch.org

Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis
Spiritual, Loving, Relevant, Transforming.
Find us on Facebook and Twitter
1900 Nicollet Ave. at Franklin
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 871-7400
www.plymouth.org

St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral
Wherever you are on your faith journey...
St. Mark's Welcomes You.
519 Oak Grove St. Minneapolis, MN
(612) 870-7800
www.ourcathedral.org

St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Wingspan Ministry, Pastoral Care for the GLBT community, Education, Music, Witness and Advocacy
100 N. Oxford St.
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651)224-3371
www.stpaulref.org

The Episcopal Church of Gethsemane
Historic Building, Progressive Faith
905 4th Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 332-5407
amindtowork.org

United Methodist Reconciling Churches
Congregations around Minnesota that intentionally welcome all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
www.mnrcumc.org

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Minneapolis Movie Bears
Social networking organization catering to the GLBT community for movies, theater, games and fun.
2830 W. 70 1/2 St.
Richfield, MN 55423
(612) 327-5340
www.minneapolismoviebears.com

SPORTS & RECREATION

Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League (TCGSL)
Join 500 GLBT softball players as we celebrate 36 years of gay softball in Minnesota.
P.O. Box 580264
Minneapolis, MN
www.tcgsl.org

TRANSGENDER

Reclaim
RECLAIM works to increase access to mental health support so that queer and transgender* youth.
3217 Hennepin Ave. S., Ste. 2
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 235-6743
www.reclaim-lgbtyouth.org

TRAVEL

Discover Stillwater
Stillwater, MN 55082
(651) 351-1717
http://www.DiscoverStillwater.com
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www.exploreminnesota.com

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7100 Northland Circle, Ste. 102
Minneapolis, MN 55428
(763) 566-7722
mplsnw.com
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Visit Duluth
Lake Superior. Historic waterfront. Vibrant arts & dining. Adventure. Hotels and B&Bs. Attractions and events.
21 W. Superior St., Ste. 100
Duluth, MN
(218) 722-4011, (800) 4-DULUTH
www.visitduluth.com

ZOOS

Minnesota Zoo
Open year-round. More than 2,400 animals to explore. Numerous special events.
13000 Zoo Blvd.
Apple Valley MN
(952) 431-9200
www.mnzoo.org



Photo by Matt Lien Photography

Kat & Chelsie Married Aug '14
Maris Ehlers Photography

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A WEEK OF INSPIRATION AND ACCESS TO TOP DESIGN

APRIL 12-19, 2015

MH MIDWEST Home designweek

Midwest Home Design Week is a week-long celebration of design across the Twin Cities providing consumers and industry members with design inspiration, ideas and expertise. Design Week provides the opportunity to experience unique access and insight into local design through events, seminars, panel discussions, design open houses and more.

KICK-OFF EVENT: SUNDAY APRIL 12TH

DESIGN BOUTIQUE

11:30A.M. – 5P.M., HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY – MINNEAPOLIS CENTRAL LIBRARY 300 NICOLLET MALL, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: *ALEXA HAMPTON*

Design Boutique is a half-day design conference featuring lunch and keynote speaker Alexa Hampton, followed by design seminars with industry experts, and concluding with a marketplace, book signing and happy hour.

Tickets are $40 in advance/$45 at the door, and available online at MHMag.com/DesignWeek

PRODUCED BY: Midwest Home

CO-PRESENTED BY: American Society of Interior Designers Minnesota; ASID 40 years. One voice.

CATERED BY: mintahoe Mintahoe Catering & Events

WINE PARTNER: Canoe Ridge Vineyard

HOSTED BY: Hennepin County Library

SATURDAY APRIL 18TH AND SUNDAY APRIL 19TH

American Society of Interior Designers Minnesota — ASID designer KITCHEN TOUR

The ASID Designer Kitchen Tour is a one-of-a-kind boutique event featuring over ten homes throughout the Twin Cities, Saturday and Sunday, April 18-19. This year's tour offers a variety of styles and budgets, which feature some of the latest trends in kitchen products and décor. These are real kitchens for real people, professionally designed by American Society of Interior Design (ASID) designers.

PURCHASE TICKETS AT **MHMAG.COM/ASID** OR ASID MINNESOTA HEADQUARTERS AT INTERNATIONAL MARKET SQUARE (CHECK/CREDIT CARD ONLY)

TICKETS: $15 IN ADVANCE/$20 AT THE DOOR TICKETS FOR A SINGLE HOME VISIT AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR FOR $10 PER HOME.

Visit MHMag.com/DesignWeek to purchase tickets, read panelist bios, and find a full list of events taking place throughout the week.